

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 03366 310417Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /078 W
-----310424Z 000113 /21

R 301102Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4208
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMCONSUL DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 3366

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, ET, US, EG
SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR

1. I CALLED ON EGYPTIAN AMB BASSIOUNY MAY 27
FOR TOUR D'HORIZON. FOLLOWING EMERGED:

A. ETHIOPIA: MENGISTU'S POSITION IS STILL NOT
STRONG, BUT IF HE CAN LAST UNTIL SEPT HE SHOULD
BE ON FIRMER GROUND. IF HE IS TO MAKE EFFECTIVE USE
OF PEASANT ARMY HE IS NOW TRAINING, HE MUST DO SO QUICKLY
BEFORE RAINS SET IN (JUNE-SEPT). HE DOUBTS THAT PEASANTS
WILL BE USED AS FRONT LINE TROOPS AND PARTICULARLY NOT
IN BALE-OGADEN REGION WHERE SEMI-DESERT CONDITIONS
WOULD PUT THEM IN VERY DISADVANTAGEOUS POSITION VIS-
A-VIS SOMALI TRIBESMEN. HE SEES NO IMMEDIATE THREAT
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PAGE 02 ADDIS 03366 310417Z

TO ADDIS, BUT BELIEVES GUERRILLA WAR IN BALE-OGADEN
AREA HAS WORSENERED FOR ETHIOPIANS AND THAT ADDIS ITSELF
MAY BE IN FOR "BLOODBATH" BY END OF THIS YEAR AS RESULT
(HE SEEMED TO BE IMPLYING THAT SOMALIA WOULD TAKE ADVAN-
TAGE OF PRESENT ETHIOPIAN PROBLEMS TO ATTACK BEFORE
IMPACT OF SOVIET WEAPONRY WAS FELT, BUT STOPPED SHORT
OF ACTUALLY SUGGESTING IT.). HE ALSO THOUGHT THAT

CIVILIAN-MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS IN ADDIS IN PARTICULAR MIGHT GROW TENSE, AND THAT THERE WAS REAL POSSIBILITY THAT CIVILIANS WOULD EVENTUALLY USE PEASANT MILITIA AND KEBELE DEFENSE FORCES TO MAKE MOVE AGAINST PMAC.

B. TFAI: TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE NOW LOOKS LIKE IT WILL GO SMOOTHLY. FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE WILL REMAIN AND IN FACT HAS ALREADY BEEN REQUESTED BY HASSAN GOULED AND AGREED TO BY FRENCH. SOMALIS ARE NOW RELAXED SINCE THINGS ARE GOING THEIR WAY. ETHIOPIANS CAN STILL CAUSE TROUBLE, BUT HE FELT IT LESS LIKELY NOW. CHIEF CONCERN WAS THAT HASSAN GOULED WILL BE ASSASSINATED BUT IT NOT CLEAR BY WHOM. TFAI WILL JOIN ARAB LEAGUE SHORTLY AFTER INDEPENDENCE, AND THIS WILL PROVE TO BE MOST EFFECTIVE GUARANTEE THAT TERRITORY WILL REMAIN INDEPENDENT. TFAI WILL ALSO JOIN OAU, BUT OAU IN NO POSITION GUARANTEE INDEPENDENCE. WHAT WILL BE NEEDED WILL BE INFLOW OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO KEEP COUNTRY GOING IN ADDITION TO WHATEVER FRENCH DO. HE WAS IMPRESSED BY CONSUL GENERAL CLARKE'S CONCEPTIONS OF HOW TO GO ABOUT BUSINESS OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE DURING RECENT VISIT TO DJIBOUTI FOR REFERENDUM. ETHIOPIANS MEANWHILE HAVE INSTRUCTED SHIPPERS TO STEP UP CONSIDERABLY USE OF PORT OF ASSAB (NEWS TO US, BUT WE'LL CHECK IT OUT).

C. OAU: SECGEN ETEKI IS HIGHLY ANNOYED THAT ETHIOPIANS EXPELLED THREE WESTERN JOURNALISTS. HE HAS NO DESIRE SEE OAU NEWS FILTERED THROUGH TASS. ACCORD-CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ADDIS 03366 310417Z

INGLY, HE WILL SEEK AT LIBREVILLE SUMMIT IN JUNE TO CREATE CORPS OF CORRESPONDENTS ACCREDITED TO OAU IN ADDIS WHO PRESUMABLY WILL REPORT OAU NEWS FAITHFULLY. EGYPT, DEPENDING UPON SITUATION, MAY SEEK OAU ENDORSEMENT OF PRINCIPLE OF MAINTAINING OAU MISSIONS IN ADDIS ACCREDITED, IF NECESSARY, ONLY TO OAU (OBVIOUSLY FOR USE IN EVENT ETHIOPIANS ATTEMPT CLOSE DOWN EGYPTIAN EMBASSY).

D. LIBYA: MENGISTU'S SECRET TWO-DAY VISIT TO LIBYA ON WAY HOME FROM MOSCOW WAS FOR PURPOSE OF GETTING LIBYA TO HELP FINANCE PURCHASE OF SOVIET WAR MATERIAL AND TO ARRANGE FOR SHIPMENT OF SOME HEAVY WEAPONRY FROM LIBYA TO ETHIOPIA.

E. CUBANS AND ISRAELIS: BASSIOUNY SPECULATED ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF CUBAN COMBAT TROOPS FOR USE PRIMARILY IN ERITREA, BUT CAME TO NO CONCLUSIONS EXCEPT TO AGREE WITH ME THAT IF THEY WERE COMMITTED TO ERITREA,

THEY WOULD FIND ERITREANS A TOUGH NUT TO CRACK. CURI-
OUSLY, FOR FIRST TIME IN LONG TIME, HE MADE NO MENTION
OF ISRAELIS, WHOM HE USUALLY FINDS EVERYWHERE.

2. COMMENT: BASSIOUNY, AS ALWAYS, IS GENERALLY WELL-
INFORMED, ALTHOUGH HE TENDS PLACE MORE CREDENCE IN
LOCAL RUMORS THAN WE USUALLY DO AND FROM TIME TO TIME TO
EXAGGERATE. NONETHELESS, HE IS ALWAYS WORTH TALKING
TO. HIS NEW MILESTONE OF SEPT. FOR MENGISTU AND THE
PMAC IS ONCE AGAIN ARBITRAY, EXTENDING BY THREE MONTHS
HIS LAST ESTIMATE OF JUNE. WE HAVE NO INDICATION AT
ALL THAT SOMALI OR SOMALI TRIBESMEN HAVE ANY INTEREST
IN CREATING A "BLOODBATH" IN ADDIS. IT ALSO SEEMS
UNLIKELY THAT PEASANT MILITIA COULD EVER BECOME MEAN-
INGFUL ANTI-PMAC FORCE, UNLESS JOINED BY MILITARY
ELEMENTS, ALTHOUGH WE HAVE BEEN REPORTING NEW SIGNS
OF POTENTIAL TENSION BETWEEN POLITBURO CIVILIAN
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PAGE 04 ADDIS 03366 310417Z

ADVISORS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS ON ONE HAND AND PMAC ON
OTHER.
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Message Attributes

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